

SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI



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M. M. AHLUWALIA

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## P R E F A C E

IN THE OPINION of Sir Syed Ahmed, Dayanand was "a person of noble and saintly disposition.. . a supreme interpreter of the Vedas." According to Romain Rolland : "It was impossible to get the better of him, for he possessed unrivalled knowledge of Sanskrit and Vedas... .. Never since Sankara had such a prophet of Vedism appeared." To Aurobindo, he was "a very soldier of Light, a warrior in God's world, a sculpture of men and institutions, a bold and rugged victor of difficulties which matter presents to spirit."

There are a few historic personalities in whom it pleased the Divine Creator to infuse a remarkable balance of truth and courage, scholarship and expression. Dayanand was one such unique soul. His revolt in the name of truth began at the age of fourteen. It mounted steadily and unmistakably towards a climax in the next four decades and a half. Purity of motives, sharpness of vision and a shining forthrightness, were its essential ingredients. And, when the span of his life ended in the year 1883, the Indian Luther had left an indelible mark, a noble impress and a powerful organization. The work of the great Rishi continues to this day.

Not even once the hands flinched while holding the ensign of truth. Not even once did the voice of this

spiritual debator quail in the face of organized hostility. When attacked, the powerful, unarmed yogi refused to be provoked. "If the criminal", Dayanand would often say, "refuses to give up his habit of crime, why should I give up my culture" ?

In Swami Dayanand Saraswati, spiritualism assumed its most practical form. In him, religion ceased to be divorced from logic. Through him, the philosophy of a people became related to action. Through him, a rich past was awakened into vibrant life to fashion anew the temple of society. Through him, a reformed nation became imminently fit and confident to win the battle for freedom.

In this small book for students, it was not possible to deal with the life of this great reformer and teacher exhaustively. In the limited space available, his personality could possibly be projected only in glimpses.

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M. M. AHLUWALIA

# CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| <b>Preface</b>                         | v    |
| CHAPTER                                |      |
| I THE TIMES                            | 1    |
| II GLIMPSES OF EARLY YEARS             | 7    |
| III IN QUEST OF TRUTH                  | 10   |
| IV AT THE FEET OF THE GURU             | 13   |
| V THE KARMAYOGI                        | 16   |
| VI HIS IDEALS AND TEACHINGS            | 26   |
| VII THE RISHI'S PERSONALITY AND IMPACT | 44   |
| <i>Glossary</i>                        | 59   |





## CHAPTER I

### THE TIMES

THE NATION was in difficulty. The weak and worthless princes were everywhere getting routed. The British Empire in India was taking shape rapidly. The society as a whole was suffering from certain inherent weaknesses. The greedy priest was powerful and ready to exploit. The simple folk had lost the way. Ceremony and ritual had replaced reason and conduct. Superstition and blind faith was mistaken as religion. There was no questioning; no spirit of inquiry. The old values were decaying; the new ones had yet to get established. Ignorance and illiteracy stalked the land. Political leadership had fumbled at every step. Cultural direction was not available. Morally and religiously there was a complete void.

The woman of India lived in oppressive darkness. Since birth, she remained bent under

pressing conditions of inequality. She was, at times, liable to be killed by her own parents. She could be married away in tender childhood. She was expected to burn herself at the pyre of her husband. If she did not become a *sati*, she was condemned to life-long widowhood. Her's was a long, endless, tearful life of unrelieved sorrow; detested by all, pitied by none. Yet she must not remarry. Was it in obedience to the scriptures? Was it for happiness in the next life? Was it for the purity of values in society? Was it to satisfy the claims of a holy religion? There was none to ask these questions and none to reply. There was hardly anyone to revolt. It was an age of abject surrender for the woman. It was an age of silent submission.

Naturally, the Hindu society seemed to break under the sins of its custodians. Its inner decay evoked challenges from outsiders. The Protestant missionaries from Holland and other parts of Europe and America had already begun their work.

It was in fact a peaceful infiltration by the Christian missionaries. They mastered local

languages and published Christian literature. They established printing presses and brought out books, tracts, newspapers and periodicals. They founded missionary centres, medical outposts and schools. They educated the converts, treated and tended the sick, and also offered employment to the needy. By the time of William Bentinck, a missionary was a familiar sight in the towns of India.

The Charter Act of 1833 gave to the missionaries, the facility of unrestricted entry into India, and their progress was remarkable. By the year 1850, there were in India 260 Christian centres, 360 foreign missionaries, 500 native preachers of Christianity, 266 churches and 91,265 Protestant Christians<sup>1</sup>. In 1854, the number of students attending the missionary schools was four times the number in the government schools<sup>2</sup>. The missionaries were acting as pioneers in female education, vocational education and training institutes<sup>3</sup>. They had brought out texts in Bengali, Hindi,

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1. Bisheshwar Prasad, *Ideas in History*, p. 58 ( see article of H. L. Gupta ).

2. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

3. *Ibid.*

Tamil, Oriya, Assamese, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Kashmiri and Bhutanese<sup>4</sup>. They were the principal relief workers in famines and epidemics.

The missionaries stood for emancipated womanhood, equality of status for all sections, triumph of reason, education for all and reforms based on fairness and humanism. There was no untouchability in their ranks, nor the evil of slavery.

Their resources were rich. They collected funds from all over Europe and America. The Government of the East India Company gave them all encouragement. Churches were built and funds provided to them out of the taxes paid by the Indians. Guns were fired in honour of the arriving 'Lat Padri'. They were allowed to move along with the troops from one military area or cantonement to the other. They entered the jails to convert the convicts. They were helped to convert even members of the royal houses. Promotions were offered to secure converts for the church.

With all this help, its own usefulness, its pro-

4. Bisheshwar Prasad, *Ideas in History*.

gressiveness, the spread of western education and the expansion of railways, Christianity captured a vast field in India.

Hinduism was in no position to meet the challenge posed by Christianity. The missionaries mounted one offensive after the other. They ridiculed idol worship, attacked caste system and occasionally used abusive terms to deride Hindu customs, practices, gods and institutions.

May be, the converts to Christianity were not many. But the outlook changed. The Indian youth turned his back to even the best traditions of his religion and history. He became a colourless copy of the west. A craving admiration for western knowledge and speech took hold of his mind. He began to feel uneasy, if not ashamed, about his own civilization or the ancient personality of India. English for him became the language of culture and advance. Macaulay was not wrong in asserting that English books were in great demand whereas the Sanskrit and Arabic books had practically no purchasers<sup>5</sup>. The

5. Bisheshwar Prasad, p. 50 ( Article of V. N. Dutt ).

passion and fervour for western knowledge and methods may be judged from one incident. In 1823, when a Sanskrit College was established at Calcutta, Raja Rammohun Roy lodged a protest with Lord Amherst against it<sup>6</sup>. In 1829, a meeting was held in the Calcutta Town Hall. Dwarakanath Tagore proposed that more and more Europeans should be enabled to settle down in India by removing all restrictions. The resolution was supported by Rammohun Roy and passed<sup>7</sup>. There also came a time when some Hindu students in Calcutta were found bringing beef into their hostels in order to prove that they were fully westernized. Similarly, the consumption of opium and liquor registered a great increase among the people. It seemed, the whole inner richness, the entire self-confidence that can be the reward of a people with a rich past and a great civilization, was withering.

It was in such times that Hinduism needed and found its greatest defender and protestant reformer in the person of Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

6. Bisheshwar Prasad, *Ideas in History*, p. 45 (Article of V. N. Dutt).

7. *Ibid*, p. 285 (Article of Biman Behari Majumdar).

## CHAPTER II

### GLIMPSES OF EARLY YEARS

ABOUT the year 1824, an orthodox family at Tankara in Gujarat was blessed with a son—the future Dayanand Saraswati. The child was named Mulashankara. Then followed a chain of events that have occasionally driven away sensitive hearts from worldliness to spirituality.

At the age of eight, the sacred thread ceremony was performed. Then followed religious teaching and study of scriptures. Mulashankara had memorized *Yajurveda Samhita* at the age of fourteen. Then, the religious-minded father told his son about the importance of Lord Shiva. The significance of Shivaratri in the Puranas was explained. The sketches of heaven were drawn. Mulashankara was asked by his father to join others in observing the Shivaratri fast and *puja*. The mother interposed: “He is just a boy of fourteen. He is used to eating

four times a day. He sleeps early. How can he stand it ?” But the child’s curiosity had been aroused. He found himself in the temple when the *puja* started.

As the night progressed, the eyes of the fasting worshippers grew heavy with sleep. Heads started drooping on the shoulders. Soon, most of them were asleep. But the fasting Mulashankara kept awake. For him it was not a mere annual ritual but an experience. His eyes remained fixed on the idol. Perhaps, the powerful god would spring into real life. Instead, a mouse appeared, pounced on the image and ate the offerings.

The child was shocked. He woke his father but got a rebuff. Mulashankara repaired back home in disgust. His mother fed him and put him to bed.

The seed of doubt had been sown. Who was god Shiva ? How was he related to the image ? What is the riddle of life ? He ran to the priests. He approached the elders in the neighbourhood. He asked the teachers, but none could explain to him the mysteries of life.



Perhaps, these ordinary people had in their lives no margin for deeper things. They never thought beyond rituals. They never strove for anything except the usual needs of the body. The child with a reflective mind remained in ferment. Hardly two years had passed when Mulashankara got his next shock. His sister died of cholera. Three years hence, his uncle expired. He found his relatives crying and wailing in a rhythmic fashion. The transitory nature of existence was brought home to him through this close experience. He fell in a mood of deep anguish. Within two years, at the age of twenty-one, he left his home for ever.

### CHAPTER III

## IN QUEST OF TRUTH

THE NEXT two decades were spent in search of reality and truth. As a homeless wanderer, Mulashankara moved from place to place. He roamed about for some time in the Gujarat regions. He walked along the banks of the Ganga, the Narbada and the Alaknanda. He descended to the valleys and caves. He scaled the Himalayan peaks. He visited the religious festivals at Haridwar and Garh Mukteshwar. He crossed ice-cold mountain streams and trod bare-foot on sharp stones. With blistered feet, starving, ill-clad, unaccosted, the young pilgrim pushed on. He was in search of truth. He was on the look out for a preceptor.

What did he find ? He found sadhus without wisdom and godliness. He met monks steeped in greed and pretensions. He saw yogis drowned in the smoke of *charas* and *sulfa*. He came

across *mahants* who had no means of earned income yet who had houses, elephants and riches. There were mendicants with lakhs of rupees. There was a scramble among them to prey on the innocent multitude. He saw the Vaisnavas, the Shaivas, the Bairagis, the commoners—all groping, all hobbling, all in a process of drift, sick with the symptoms of inner hollowness and mental blankness. Inside the temples, Mulashankara found countless gods and goddesses whose stone and bronze images were supposed to be endowed with imaginary powers. The priests around them employed all skill and guile to ensnare the followers. The laymen were ignorant. Certain day-to-day rituals engrossed their whole time and interest.

Our young pilgrim, tall and strong, with a handsome face, bold eyes, ample forehead and broad chest did not fail to attract the attention of many. A *mahant* invited him to become his disciple, informing him of the wealth of the *Math*. But the pilgrim, who had by now assumed the name of Dayanand, said: “My father had more wealth than your *Math*.

Yet I left my home. I gave up worldly pleasures to attain yogic knowledge and salvation. You have neither of these, and I cannot stay with you."

## CHAPTER IV

### AT THE FEET OF THE GURU



FOR FIFTEEN YEARS, Dayanand had wandered. The Himalayan peaks did not provide the answer to his quest. The holy waters of the Ganga and the Narbada did not quench his spiritual thirst. While in Deccan, he heard of a blind yogi living at Mathura. He knocked at the gates of this great scholar, Swami Virjananda, on 14th November 1860.

Virjananda originally belonged to the village Gangapur in the Kartarpur area of the Punjab. At five, he lost his eyesight due to smallpox. At twelve, his parents died. He left his home, visited centres of knowledge and learnt the shastras and grammar from many scholars. Finally, Mathura became the seat where he ran a small grammar school. This blind sadhu firmly believed that what passed as Hindu religion had actually no relation with the ancient Vedic Dharma. The

prevailing scriptures, the Puranas and the like were full of anti-Vedic theology. Virjananda's "learning was too high for mass appreciation".

At the feet of such a teacher, Dayanand sat for three years. He offered to his Guru full oriental devotion. He fetched water from the Yamuna, massaged the Guru's body and swept his room. Life was quite hard. Dayanand's school was no more than a hovel. He slept on the floor of a temple. He depended on small charities for bare necessities. He studied avidly the grammar of Panini, *Ashtadhyayi*, the great commentary of Patanjali, *Mahabhashya* and the Darshanas. "There was a heart to heart talk. A soul conversed with the other soul in all visible and invisible ways till the dark clouds over Dayanand's mind were all scattered." The sightless seer had opened the eyes of his disciple. He came out as a new man, satisfied, and at peace with himself.

In the year 1863, Dayanand begged permission to leave. As *Dakshina* the Guru demanded a pledge : "You would spread true knowledge of the Vedas. You would re-establish the Vedic principles. You would

undertake to condemn falsehoods even if the mission costs your life. This is my *Dakshina*." Dayanand agreed to complete the assignment and departed. And, in the next twenty years, till his death in 1883, Dayanand did not rest. He entered into the thickest of the battle. He attacked every haunt of falsehood. He challenged the vested groups of priestly power. He was a relentless crusader. He was the fearless defender of true Hinduism.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE KARMAYOGI

NOW DAYANAND had the light that could illuminate the path of humanity. Now he had the sincerity and power to save the suppressed. He had the confidence to wrest the initiative from the pretenders.

The task was, however, difficult. Dayanand had no material resources whatsoever. There were hundreds of sects among the Hindus who would oppose him to defend their religious empires. The mass of the people believed that there was Vedic sanction behind idol worship, child marriage, practice of *sati*, blood sacrifice, and many such rituals. Then, there were two highly developed religions to contend with. Christianity was progressing due to the fact of British rule. Islam, a highly practical religion, was devoted to the principles of one God and human equality. It had a pull for the 'untouchables' of the Hindu society. The Swami was



conscious of all these factors. He was out for the adventure. He was willing to pay the price.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati undertook extensive tours, published literature and threw open challenges for religious discussion. He debated with Pandits, Muslim Maulvis and Christian missionaries. He lectured to the masses. He talked to the princes. He condemned idol worship and meaningless sacrifices.

The Swami began his work by writing a pamphlet against the popular religious book, the Bhagvata Purana. At Gwalior, he challenged the Vaishnava Pandits for debate. They left the field. At Jaipur, there was a debate with the Brahmans in the presence of the Maharaja. The Brahmans were effectively silenced. At Ajmer, Swami Dayanand held another debate with Christian priests led by Robinson. Robinson and others acknowledged the matchless debating talent and Vedic study of the Swami. They wrote of their opponent: "We have not come across in life a single such learned man of Sanskrit. Such people are few in this world."

The Swami reached Haridwar one month ahead of the *Kumbh*. The *Kumbh* provided a complete picture of Hindu unity as well as Hindu thoughtlessness. The Swami saw at Haridwar "the mountain ranges, one behind the other, the snow-clad peaks, the pure sparkling waters, the rishi caves, the endless line of religious centres and *Maths*." He also saw there "a vast multitude, steeped in darkness and ignorance, drowned in blind faith and rituals, chased by suspense and clouded thinking." He saw there "the nature's beauty and man's crookedness."

The Swami pitched his camp at an open space and started lecturing to the people. He debated with the Pandits from Kashi and exposed them. He criticised the eighteen Puranas, idol worship, *Tantric* scriptures, drugs and intoxicants, adultery, stealing, lies and pride. Regarding the Ganga water, the Swami said, "It is only a drinking water. It cannot get you *Moksha*. Only good actions can get you salvation."

At Anupshahr (U. P.), the Swami debated with such success that the idol of Saligram was

floated down the Ganga. At this place, a Brahman poisoned him but the Swami threw out the poison through a yogic exercise and saved himself. The Muslim Tehsildar Syed Mohammed who was a devotee of the Swami arrested the culprit and presented him before the Swami. But he had to be set free. The Swami remarked : "I have not come to this world to get people imprisoned. I have come to get them released."

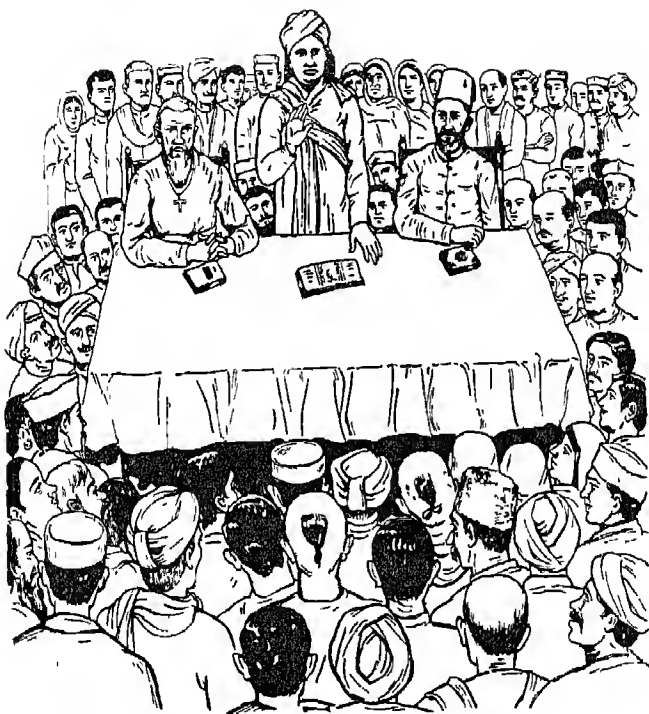
At Farrukhabad ( U. P. ), there was a debate with a well-known Pandit, Angad Shastri, on idol worship. The Shastri accepted defeat. He became Dayanand's disciple along with many others. Idols were thrown into the river. At Kanpur, the local English magistrate was in the chair when the debate with Pandit Haldar Ojha took place. The magistrate declared Ojha routed.

Kashi was the citadel of Brahmans. It was known for its scholars and debators. Swami Dayanand Saraswati sent a message to the Kashi ruler asking for debate with the Brahmans of Kashi. The priests demanded time for preparation and Vedic studies. Fifteen

days were granted to them. After that a debate was fixed at a place called Madho Bagh.

The brave disciple of the blind faqir of Mathura was alone. He had only courage and truth as companions. The *mandap* and the assembly were under the control of the city kotwal. The Brahmans had already inflamed the feelings of people by telling them that a *nastik* (non-believer) has entered the holy city who criticizes god Vishwanath. The Pandits arrived in royal Palkis, under royal umbrellas, shouting slogans and accompanied by vast processions of citizens. The lone *Sanyasi* soon found himself encircled by a hostile mob of 50,000 idol worshippers. The Kashi ruler took his seat.

The numerous Pandits shot forth their questions : "What is *Dharma* ? What is *Adharma* ? Do the Vedas permit idol worship ?" The *Sanyasi* had ready answers. In return, he closely questioned them, tested them, countered them, silenced and routed them. They failed to defeat the *Sanyasi*. Soon the mob brought there for the purpose took hold of the



*Scene of a Religious Debate.*

situation. The hostile people had run short of arguments; they threw stones and shoes on the *Sanyasi*. Dayanand could save himself through sheer courage and presence of mind.

The Pandits marched back to the city proclaiming their victory although the Rishi had remained unbeaten. The facts could hardly be reversed. The newspapers reported the debate and declared him triumphant. The Kashi affair brought Rishi Dayanand some fame and glory. Even the ruler of Kashi apologized to him.

In the year 1872, the Rishi reached Calcutta and met the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj. Keshab Chandra Sen had a talk with him. Sen said it was a pity that such a scholar of the Vedas did not know English language. He could otherwise be a very desirable companion for the trip to England. The Rishi replied, it was a pity that the leader of the Brahmo Samaj preached to the people in a language which they did not understand. So far the Swami had lectured in Sanskrit with the help of interpreters. But on the advice of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Swami started

lecturing in Hindi. The idea of organizing the Arya Samaj originated after the Calcutta visit. Dayanand also met Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Barrister Chandra Shekhar Sen, Barrister Umeshchandra Bandhopadhyaya and Pt. Satyavrat Samshrami. He gave a number of talks at the house of Keshab Chandra Sen. In the year 1874, Dayanand visited Bombay where the Arya Samaj was founded on 20th April 1875. His famous work, *Satyarth Prakash*, was published. The idea of Arya educational institutions was also mooted here.

In July 1875, the Swami visited Poona at the invitation of Justice Ranade. Poona was the stronghold of Snatana Dharma. A huge procession of the Vedas, placed in a Palki, followed by Dayanand on the back of an elephant was taken out. He delivered fifteen talks there which have since been published.

In the year 1877, the Swami reached Delhi where the royal Durbar was being held. He arranged a meeting where Keshab Chandra Sen, Sir Syed Ahmed, Baba Navinchandra, Baba Harishchandra Chintamani, Munshi Indramani and the Swami himself were pre-

sent. This was perhaps to evolve some kind of religious unity. But no agreement could be reached.

In the Punjab, the Christian missionaries had been having a free hand. Conversions were numerous. The Swami reached Ludhiana in April 1877 and stayed in the cottage of Dr. Rahim Khan, after being expelled from the garden of a Hindu. The tide of Christianity was soon rolled back. The Arya Samaj was founded at Lahore on 24th June 1877. The Punjab soon became a stronghold of the Arya Samaj movement.

While in the Punjab, the Swami received an invitation from the ruler of Kashmir. The Swami declined to go there saying : "In Kashmir there are many temples built by the ruler. I shall condemn idol worship. It will give pain to the ruler." It was suggested that if Dayanand stopped condemning idol worship, the Kashmir ruler would welcome him. Dayanand asked : "Should I please the ruler or obey the divine will ?"

The Maharana of Udaipur was the disciple of Dayanand. One day, he said : "Maharaj, if



you stop condemning idol worship it will be most helpful. This state is under god Mahadeva. You can, if you wish, become the high priest of the temple whose estate could bring you lakhs of rupees." Dayanand was angry : "You have tried to tempt me to violate divine principles. What is this temple and what is the worth of your small state I can leave behind its frontiers in one race "

Till the end of his life, Dayanand remained uncompromising in his principles. He refused to abstain from speaking the truth under any threat. After receiving an indirect warning from the Commissioner of Bareilly, the Swami said : "People say do not reveal the truth The Collector or the Commissioner would be angry. Let the *Chakravarty Raja* be angry. This body is perishable. To try to preserve it by withholding the truth is a sin. Let anyone destroy my body. But show me that brave person who can claim to destroy my soul."

In the year 1883, people asked Dayanand not to go to Jodhpur : "Do not condemn prostitution there, as the prostitutes there are very powerful. The people are by temperament

upstarts". But these warnings had no effect. He said : "Even if they burn my fingers like so many candles, I will go there to speak the truth." He did speak the truth in its purest form and frank style. Even the ruler of Jodhpur heard the truth and decided to reform himself.

But, the price had to be paid. On 29th September 1883, Dayanand was poisoned at Jodhpur. He was taken to Mount Abu and finally to Ajmer. On 30th October 1883, at 7 p.m. Swami Dayanand Saraswati expired.

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## CHAPTER VI

### HIS IDEALS AND TEACHINGS

SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI was always undertaking extensive tours. He was engaged in conversing and debating with scholars, disciples and opponents. The work of establishing and organising the Arya Samaj consumed most of his time.

Yet, he never gave up the routine of high thinking and deep study. He made a comparative survey of different religions, namely, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. His knowledge of Vedic scriptures and Hindu mythology was amazingly deep. His opponents found him matchless in the exposition of Vedas, Upanishads, Darshanas, Brahmanas, Manu Smriti and various Sutras. All this is abundantly proved through his famous work, *Satyarth Prakash*.

Dayanand's knowledge of Hindi was not fair

in the beginning. His mother-tongue was Gujarati. In conversation and study he was using Sanskrit. Yet, he published *Satyarth Prakash* in Hindi. Its second edition was published again in improved Hindi by the Swami himself

*Satyarth Prakash* remains to this day a correct representative of Dayanand's views on life and religion. We shall make this, and a few other works, the base for this chapter.

In his works, the Swami expressed his ideas on various subjects some of which may be reproduced below.

#### I. MORAL VIRTUES

Dayanand prescribes eleven virtues to be adhered to; ten being derived from Manu. The one addition is *Ahimsa*. People must never swerve from the right path under the influence of pleasure or pain, profit or loss, honour or dishonour. The mind should be driven away from evil and directed to right action. Things belonging to others are not to be coveted in thought even. The body is to be kept clean by water; the soul and mind pure

by avoiding feelings of attachment and enmity. One should have good control of one's senses. Wisdom may be developed from knowledge of the Vedas, sex control, good company and clean habits. One should be true in mind, word and deed. Evil passions such as anger must be avoided.

## II. YAJNAS AND BLOOD SACRIFICES

Dayanand did not think *Yajnas* need be performed to appease gods and goddesses by sacrificing goats, cows, horses or pigs. *Yajnas* actually meant a real performance of one's duties.

The performance of religious duty by contemplating God and studying holy books was the true *Rishi Yajna*. The purification of air by burning sandal wood, ghee, sugar and other fumigating agents was actually the *Deva Yajna*. Elders and parents must be properly looked after as a duty. This was the *Pitri Yajna*. Hospitality to the guest was the foremost duty of the householder as *Atithi Yajna*. A person who eats before feeding his guests will endanger the growth, prosperity and

glory, of his family. Lastly, a householder, besides being a lover of all humanity, should be humane to all animals. This was the *Bhuta Yajna*.

Thus, according to Dayanand, love for all, cleanliness, respect for elders, regard for one's parents, hospitality, purifying the atmosphere and spiritual meditation were the real *Yajnas* that must be performed.

### III CASTE SYSTEM

Dayanand strongly condemned the caste system prevailing in his times. He took pains to show that the caste system of the Hindus was just the opposite of the Vedic *Varna Vyavastha* i.e. class system.

The Vedic *Varna Vyavastha* was in fact a division of labour. It was not birth-based. It had no rigidity. It gave full opportunity of progress to everyone in the society according to his actions or acquired qualifications. It provided a healthy facility of adjustment and placement on the basis of actual performance.

Can the children of non-Brahman parents be ever Brahmans ? The Swami replied : "Yes, they have been, they are, and they shall be."<sup>1</sup> He gave the example of sages, Jabali, Vishvamitra and Matange who came from non-Brahman families and became Brahmans.

Dayanand felt, an ignorant person should be called a Shudra. High-born people, if ignorant and sinful, should be reckoned in the low *Varna*. If a person born in a Shudra family possesses merit, and attains the temperament of a Brahman or Kshatriya, he becomes a Brahman or Kshatriya as the case may be.<sup>2</sup>

Dayanand accepted only three principles of classification. These were : (1) aptitude (*Svabhava*); (2) acquired merit (*Guna*); and (3) actual performance (*Karma*). If a person wanted to be a Brahman, he must live accordingly. A Brahman, according to the Rishi was "duty-bound to a life of simplicity, poverty and high thinking. He is to demand nothing, not even fame." Wealth and women must not tempt him. If a person feels inclined to fight

1. *Satyarth Prakash*, Chapter IV, para 18.

2. *Ibid* , para 23

and sacrifice his all for the protection of the society, let him choose to be a Kshatriya. The same applies to other *Varnas*.

The Rishi advocated cordial relations among the members of the four *Varnas*. They must share each other's grief and happiness. There should be a feeling of genuine companionship among them. The Rishi tried to fashion the Hindu society on the basis of these ideas. In debates, he often criticised the existing caste system as un-Vedic and harmful. The Vedic *Varna Vyavastha* was never based on birth. It was related to real performance.

The Swami was confronted with the 11th verse of the 31st chapter of the *Yajur-Veda* regarding the supposed birth of the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Shudra out of the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of God respectively. Dayanand explained: "The sense you attach to the verse is not correct. Here the reference is to the bodyless God. When God has no body he cannot have portions such as mouth, etc." The correct meaning according to the Rishi was: "Whoever is the most excellent like the mouth, is



a Brahman; whoever has bodily power is a Kshatriya ....; he who, with the help of his thighs, goes abroad and trades is called the Vaishya; and he who is like the lowest limb of the body and is ignorant is called the Shudra.”

#### IV. IDOLATORY

The Rishi advocated the worship of only one God, whom he described as All-truth, All-pervading, Eternal, Holy, the maker of the Universe, and Formless. Dayanand felt that in the Vedas there was not even a word to sanction idol worship. The Rishi expresses his views on this issue by answering a number of questions. Some of them are given below :

Q. God is formless. It is not easy to have its conception in the mind. Therefore, some image is essential. Where is the harm ?

A. When God is formless and all pervasive, it is not possible to make an idol of Him. If the mere sight of an idol is a reminder of God, is it not possible to think of God by seeing God-made objects as earth, water, fire, air...which exhibit the won-

derful creativeness of the Almighty ?  
Are not these huge idols, the earth and the mountains...sufficient to remind you of the existence of that Great Artist, God ?

Q. When God is all-pervading, He is in the idol also. Why is it not then proper to worship Him by supposing him in the object ?

A. When God is all-pervading, then to suppose or conceive Him in one article to the exclusion of others is just like depriving a world-emperor of his vast empire and confining him to the ownership of a small cottage. What a great disrespect !

Q. You can fix your mind at an object which has some form. Idol worship is, therefore, necessary ?

A. The mind can never remain fixed on a gross-object. It grasps that object for an instant and then begins to wander from part to part. But the mind can run to its full capacity in the formless God and His attributes.

Dayanand held that idol worship leads to unhygienic congestion in the temples. Worship of different idols leads to hostility among their worshippers and thus tends to disrupt the country's unity. "They depend upon the idols for the defeat of their enemies. Thus they are vanquished with the loss of their country and liberty. ."<sup>3</sup> Those who contemplate on the inert substance, themselves become inert and dull. The Swami reminds the questioner of what happened to the idol-worshippers of Benaras, Mathura and Somnath temples when the foreign invaders marched in their troops.<sup>4</sup>

#### V BRAHMACHARYA AND MARRIAGE

The Swami was a firm believer in moral discipline. Sexual control was essential for human dignity. A limit on one's passions must be imposed for the health of individuals and the society as a whole. *Brahmacharya* would impart mental and physical strength to the student. It would bestow sanity and confidence in place of darkness and feebleness. It would give him courage and solidity to face all problems. Once the Rishi was staying

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3. *Satyarth Prakash*, Chapter XI, para 74.

4. *Ibid.*, Chapter XI, paras 78, 85.

with Sardar Vikram Singh of Jullundur. The Sardar demanded a proof of the fact that *Brahmacharya* could give incalculable strength as emphasised by Dayanand. The Rishi kept quiet. In the evening, the Sardar got into his carriage drawn by two powerful horses. The coachman lashed the horses. The animals lifted their frontal hoofs helplessly in the air. He lashed again. The carriage did not move. The Sardar looked back to find the Rishi holding the carriage. The Sardar got his proof and the Swami released his hold.

Dayanand believed that rules of morality were applicable to all; even the saints. No one could claim that his inner self was pure and the activity of external organs did not matter. Such saints were hypocrites.

The Swami believed in the marriage of fully grown up boys and girls. Regarding choice, the Swami was in favour of giving full liberty to the boy and the girl.<sup>5</sup> Marriage with mutual consent was more enduring, and helpful in the birth of excellent children.<sup>6</sup> The

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5. *Satyarth Prakash*, Chapter IV, para 11.

6. *Ibid.*

Rishi was against the marriage of near relatives for medical and social reasons. He was, in fact, in favour of distant marriages for healthy interchange of manners, good progeny and helpful climate for the girls.<sup>7</sup>

The Rishi believed in the equality of both the sexes. Men and women should enjoy equal rights in sexual matters. "There is not one instance in which he has not permitted to the woman that he has allowed to the man." The Swami criticized the practices of child marriage, sale of girls, female infanticide and *sati*. He was conscious of the pitiable lot of the widows. Marriage of grown up partners, marriage through mutual consent and remarriage for the widows were the correct remedies advocated by the Rishi. Since his times, the Arya Samaj has been promoting and performing widow remarriages throughout the country.

#### VI CHARACTER AND STATE

Swami Dayanand saw an important inter-connection between the character of the people and the quality of the government. "All

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7. *Satyarth Prakash*, Chapter IV, para 4.

forms of governments have been subject to success or failure on account of the high or low character of the people to whom the task of administration was entrusted. Every adult must have the right to vote. Yet, the government formed on such basis would be open to grave danger if the people are unjust, dishonest, cruel and unworthy."

In the sixth chapter of *Satyarth Prakash*, the Rishi discusses in some detail the general principles of state-craft. Its main theme is character. "Political progress is impossible without moral foundation. Political progress is meaningless if it aims not at moral perfection." The rulers must be "learned, virtuous and cultured. A good government raises the level of the character of the people and the character of the people goes a long way in securing a good government."

On the loss of Independence and the value of self-rule, the Swami expresses his clear views. Idleness, vanity and mutual conflicts, according to him, had led to the loss of freedom. Foreign rule, whatever its benefits, could never be preferable to self-rule. He remarks :

Whatever may one do, the indigenous rule is always the best. Foreign government cannot be perfectly beneficial even when it is free from religious bias, race prejudice and imbued with parental justice and mercy.<sup>8</sup>

With great insight, Dayanand mentions how differences of language, culture and customs were hard to shake off. These differences led to disunity. The remedy prescribed by the Rishi was one common language and due regard to the teachings of Vedas. In his view Hindi alone could be such a language.

Dayanand was against absolute authority "If the ruling class be independent of the people, it will interfere and bring ruin to the people."<sup>9</sup>

On a question : "Who is a true king in the true sense", the Rishi gives an interesting answer on the authority of Manu :

Law is the real head, law is the real ruler  
...Law governs the king, law protects the  
subjects, law wakes when men are asleep;

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8. *Satyarth Prakash*, Chapter VIII, para 51.

9. *Satyarth Prakash*, Chapter IV, para 2.

therefore, wise men hold that law alone is religion.

Law is very grand, law is a great light, law cannot be sustained by undeveloped souls. Law destroys the king who deviates from the path of righteousness.

Law is worthy of being defended by him alone who is pure of heart<sup>10</sup>....

*Satyarth Prakash* contains many details of how a country should be militarily prepared and defended; how victory should be achieved in war; and how sometimes it may be desirable to "effect a strategic withdrawal in order to achieve victory."<sup>11</sup>

According to Dayanand, the prisoners of war must be properly treated. A defeated foe should never be ridiculed, scolded or reminded of his fall. He should be provided with the necessities of life. The enemy's children "should be brought up like your own." The enemy's women "should be looked upon as your sisters and daughters."<sup>12</sup>

10. *Satyarth Prakash*, para 8.

11. *Ibid.*, para 13.

12. *Ibid*



In the field of justice, the Rishi felt, a criminal was never forgivable even if he was a close relative or priest. If the criminal is of a higher status, say a minister or a Brahman, the punishment should be proportionately higher. If a person commits a theft, "he should be fined 8 times if he is a Shudra, 16 times if he is a Vaishya and 20 times if he is a Kshatriya. If a Brahman, he should be fined 64 times, a hundred times and even hundred and twenty times."<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, the minister should be punished with a fine 800 times, and the king a thousand times of the fine that may be imposed on an ordinary person for the same crime.<sup>14</sup> The Rishi advocated severe punishments, prompt justice and impartiality in this area of administration. He was in favour of severing of limbs, public exposure to the biting of dogs, burning alive etc. for certain crimes.<sup>15</sup> Mild punishments are actually "grievous to the nation" and are liable to be administered to a vast mass of law-breakers. Harsh punishments

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13. *Satyarth Prakash*, Chapter VI, para 28.

14. *Ibid*.

15. *Ibid*, para 29.

would mean fewer crimes and eventually less punishment on an over-all basis.<sup>16</sup>

The Rishi was interested to see a balanced development of intellect and physique of the nation. The state should not neglect the one for the other. "If only intellectual power is developed and physical side ignored, then one physically strong man can vanquish hundreds of learned persons. If only physical power is developed and not intellectual, then also the work of the government suffers, as no good government can be carried on without brain."<sup>17</sup>

Besides the above subjects, Rishi Dayanand expressed his views on religion, God, celibacy, education of children, truthfulness, meditation, rules of learning and teaching, courses of study, duties of Brahmans and others, Sanyasa and other Ashramas, miracles etc. He gave his critical comments on religious sects among the Hindus; and also on other faiths such as Islam and Christianity.

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16. *Satyarth Prakash*, para 31.

17. *Ibid*, para 34.

From the ideas expressed, Dayanand comes out as a man of clear views, critical mind, deep and extensive study, provoking frankness and unrivalled debating talent. He was not prepared to compromise on his ideals. He was not willing to stop proclaiming the truth whatever may be the consequences. His faith in the Vedas rested on rational approach and discerning study. There lies the strength of his ideas. When asked : "Do you believe in any particular religion ?" the Swami replied : "I believe in the faith which can be proved to be true by knowledge and reason."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Har Bilas Sarda, p. 289.

## CHAPTER VII

# THE RISHI'S PERSONALITY AND IMPACT

### I

DAYANAND was over six feet in height, possessing a radiant personality and exceptional physical strength. He was born of stout parents. He had observed unbroken celibacy. He remained free from domestic worries and worldly emotions. He had toughened his body in the extreme cold of the Himalayas and on the burning sands of the river banks. He passed through these rigours in the scantiest of clothes. He disciplined his body and mind by leading a life of hard toil and pure thinking. He learnt yoga and practised it.

Yet, his physical strength and moral courage were astounding for all the above reasons. He would often cover a distance of 39 miles

between Agra and Mathura in three hours. Strong wrestlers would sometimes request permission to massage his body to test his strength. They always went back dazed and honoured from the experience. The Swami once said : "Lift my leg before you try to shampoo it". They exerted to the extreme but failed. In the open assembly at Roorkee in August 1875, while discoursing on the benefits of *Brahmacharya*, the Swami stretched his arm and thundered : "I am over fifty; I challenge anyone to bend my arm". None responded to the call. At Wazirabad, in the same year, he likewise challenged the wrestlers present in a meeting. None came forth.

Unmindful of the wild beasts and difficult terrain, he passed through dense forests and hills all alone to explore the sources of rivers, Narbada and Alaknanda. He wandered unarmed in snowy regions and untrod arcas in search of yogis.

Truth was the very breath of his life. No temptation could turn him away from truth. There were dozens of attempts on his life. Hired ruffians were set upon him. Powerful

chieftains drew their swords. Stones and bricks were hurled. His hut was set on fire. A snake was thrown over him. He was poisoned a number of times. He held aloft the ensign of truth.

The *Mahant* of Okhimath promised him rich dividends if the young seeker of truth became his disciple. The Raja of Benaras offered him money if Dayanand stopped the criticism of idol worship. The Raja of Venkitgiri offered to finance entirely the publication of one of his works, *Veda Bhashya*, on the same condition. The Maharana of Udaipur threw a very rich temptation for the same purpose. The ruler of Kashmir invited him. But the Rishi rejected all these offers with supreme contempt. He clung to the ideal of truth. In his sojourns and lectures he faced excited mobs, angry goondas, religious bigots and murderers. He remained unshaken and tranquil. He glowed with confidence and inner peace in the face of perils.

His meetings were often attended by Europeans and English officials of high status. High churchmen, commanding officers, Inspectors

General of Police, Magistrates and Collectors were, at times, attending his lectures. The Swami never fashioned his words to suit their pleasure. He always spoke the truth on Vedic authority. His comparative study and exposition of different religions was not conditioned by anyone's presence. Truth remained the only consideration. The English churchmen and officials, the Pauranic Brahmans, the Muslim Ulemas were occasionally provoked by such a forthright criticism of some of their religious beliefs. But, many times, they also realized and acknowledged that they were in the presence of a man of great intellect and unbeatable moral courage. They felt in the burning words of this lone Sanyasi an inexpressible love of truth. Maulvi Murad Ali, Editor of the *Rajputana Gazette* (Urdu) of Ajmer met Dayanand five times. He had close discussions and felt "thoroughly satisfied". He acted as a strong supporter of cow-protection, and the Rishi was pleased to give him a copy of his photograph.

His passion for truth is best illustrated by an incident. In 1877, at Chandpur, a religious conference had been called. The most distingui-

shed scholars and divines of Islam and Christianity arrived. Dayanand represented Vedic thought. Someone confided to him that the Muslims and the Hindus should unite to refute Christianity.

But the Rishi refused, saying "rather all should meet together in love to find out the truth without attacking anyone."

Truth was for all and its discovery could lead to the formation of a common divine faith. In 1879, at Danapur in U.P., a few European ladies and gentlemen came to see Rishi Dayanand. A very interesting conversation took place. The Rishi said: "Like the sun, moon, earth, rain, air and all other things created by God, the divine faith should also be the same for all. There is some truth in all religions. They all agree that speaking the truth and non-stealing are good principles. If a seeker were to collect all such good principles on which all religions agree, it would be a divine religion."

At Bareilly, Dayanand was staying in Begambagh of Lala Lakshminarayan. He learnt his



host was keeping a prostitute. He condemned him and said : "Listen, my friend, I will not be partial to anyone and will never hesitate to tell the truth." The prostitute was sent away that very evening. Thakur Das, a goldsmith, had taken a second wife while the first one was alive. He asked Dayanand one day to initiate him into yoga. The Swami said sarcastically : "Marry one more woman; your yoga will be complete."

In the Punjab, an interesting incident took place. Dayanand, after public notice, was giving a discourse. Many Europeans and Indian Missionaries came to listen him. General Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief of India, also walked in. The Rishi continued to attack the contradictions of the Bible and its tenets. General Roberts listened all that. After the lecture, he advanced and shook hands with Dayanand, appreciating his absolute fearlessness.

Many princes of Rajputana were his disciples. But Dayanand would not spare even a prince. When the Rishi entered the palace of a ruler he found him seeing off a prostitute. Imme-

diately, in the ruler's own palace, Dayanand said : "Kings were like lions and they should have no connection with bitches." The royal head, bent down in repentance and shame, had to listen to the Rishi.

In the Benaras debate, Dayanand had been encircled by a hostile mob of 50,000 people, besides the unscrupulous priests. His very life had been endangered. But the Rishi visited Benaras, again and again, perhaps seven times, and each time he threw a challenge. In short, his crusade for truth was relentless and without a trace of fear. His voice could not be silenced.

Rishi Dayanand was open to conviction. He was quick to admit his error, if any. He was ready to change, if convinced. He used to lecture in Sanskrit. The Brahmo Samaj leader Keshab Chandra Sen advised him to use Hindi language. He agreed. He was asked to put on more clothes than a mere loin cloth. He consented again. On one occasion, a man stood up in the open assembly and pointed out the contradiction in what Dayanand was talking and what his book, *Veda Bhashya*, con-

tained. The Rishi admitted the error, explained how it had occurred, and promised to get it corrected.

Rishi Dayanand held fast to his principles. But he loved people of all religions. Many Muslim scholars used to come to him for debate and discussion. He himself went to deliver a lecture at the Bungalow of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, then a sub-judge at Benaras. The Lord Bishop of Agra asked for appointment. Swamiji himself went to see him. At Bareilly, Rev. T. G. Scott, with whom Rishi Dayanand had also held a debate, began to attend all lectures of the Swami. One day, he was not to be seen. On inquiry, the Swami was told that that day being Sunday, Rev. Scott was busy teaching in the Church. At once the Rishi said: "Let us go to the Church and hear him." He walked to the Church with some other people. On seeing the Rishi, Rev. Scott came down from the aisle and requested him to give a discourse. Dayanand spoke for about twenty minutes. It is almost amazing to note, and perhaps a testimony to his endearing personality, that his rivals holding different views were always coming to

him. They loved to listen to him, argue with him, and enrich their minds. Not only this, it must be said to the credit of Christian missionaries and Muslim scholars that they showed the necessary temperament for religious debate on most of the occasions. The Pauranic priests, however, felt embittered and aroused.

Rishi Dayanand was a man of wit and humour, besides being a great debator. He never lost patience with those who tried to harm him, even physically. He was without bitterness. He forgave easily. He seldom talked about his own person. He refused to be a Guru. He stood for independent inquiry and rational approach. He was invariably punctual.

Dayanand was a true yogi. Earlier, in order to master this science he went on an extensive search for yogis. He met them at Chanoda Kanyali, on the banks of Narbada. He sought them in Mount Abu, Vyasashram, Garhwal, and Joshimath. He learnt yoga from Parmanand Paramhans, Yoganand, Jwalanand Puri, Shivanand Giri, Gangagiri and others. He practised yoga in the jungles of Chandec across the Ganga at Haridwar.

According to Dayanand the 'ancients' thoroughly understood the laws of attraction and repulsion of all things in Nature between each other. The yoga phenomena were based upon that knowledge. The yogi changes or intensifies these attractions and repulsions at will. A yogi has to relinquish five things, namely : ignorance, egotism, passion, selfishness, fear of death. Yoga was in perfect harmony with the natural laws.

Dayanand never exhibited any of his yogic or psychic powers. But many people had seen him meditating while his body rose above the ground, or it rested on the surface of water in a lake. Many times, he made correct predictions of events about to pass. But the whole stress of his mission was on truth based on reason. Yoga, according to him, was a very difficult science, and few men were capable of learning it at that time.

## II

The impact of Dayanand's personality and role was unique. After centuries, the people heard in the Hindu society that all were

equal. The Brahmans, the Shudras, even the non-Hindus, had the right to study the Vedas. All had the right to receive education. The mist of spirits, ghosts and incantations began to clear. For the first time, the people learnt that sins once committed could never be forgiven. The gods could not remove them; pilgrimages could not wipe them; a dip in the river could not wash them.

The amulets, the rosary, the images, the elaborate rituals, the sacrifices would not help. Only good actions, purity and sound reason were the remedies. Everything must relate to logic.

Even the ban on cow-slaughter was demanded by the Rishi on economic grounds rather than its sacredness. Similarly, he denounced child marriage, female infanticide and purdah system on the basis of pure logic and humanism.

The hierarchy of religious orders was shattered. Religion emerged from the nooks of dim temples and mysterious scriptures. It was viewed in the sunshine of reason and debate. It was understood through mass-

participation. People were not mere disciples, or only a band of frenzied singers in a temple compound. They were now exalted as discriminating judges. They were not passive onlookers. They were now enthused to decide what was right.

Dayanand threw open the wells of knowledge so that his people could drink for themselves. Dayanand transfused in the languid body of India his own formidable energy, his certainty, his lion's blood. His words rang with heroic power. He reminded the secular passivity of a people, too prone to bow to fate, that the soul is free and that action is the generator of destiny."

Dayanand connected the important portions of our ancient heritage to the stream of modern life. Thus, he renovated and invigorated it. It was an age of scientific materialism and economic penetration of the west. Its shadows were falling over India. The Rishi revived Vedic values, and the Vedic way of life to save the nation from the grip of westernism. The result was amazing. A new pride in India's destiny was born. A new

confidence in its superior culture was recreated. A sturdy and healthy society, ready to take up any challenge, took position. The nation was at once restored back to its Aryan ideas. It seemed, the hand of an Aryan Luther had touched every part of life in the whole of northern India.

The memory of his struggles, the message of his books, the zeal of his followers and the deep roots of his institution, never faded. The Arya Samaj organizations founded by the Rishi at many places grew from strength to strength. Old customs, rituals and beliefs did not completely disappear. But the initiative now always rested with Dayanand's followers. The tide of reform and social reconstruction could never be rolled back. The Hindu woman was restored to her Vedic esteem. The glory of good conduct became significant for all.

The first Arya Samaj was established by Dayanand at Bombay. The real aim as explained in its 28 principles was "to promote the good of whole mankind." These principles were reduced to ten at Lahore in 1877. But the afore-said aim retained its central



importance. Under these principles, an Arya was expected to be always willing to give up falsehood and adopt truth. He was not to be content in his own uplift alone. He was to view his advancement in the uplift of others. In matters which affected the well-being of all, an Arya was to subordinate his personal likings to the general good; in matters which affected him alone, he was to enjoy freedom of action. Within the life-time of Dayanand such bodies sprang up all over India. Within two years of the death of the Rishi, there were Arya centres at about two hundred places. A large number of educational institutions of Anglo-Vedic character were established where modernism was not divorced from nationalism. To this day, this militant church and these academic centres remain an important part of the life of this country.

Dayanand demolished the authority of tradition and orthodoxy. He believed in reason. The force of reason promoted individual freedom. The Rishi also restored boldly the superiority of Vedic thought and culture. These two factors became the base of Indian nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth

century. The spell of the West was broken and the cross-currents of Indian renaissance swept the minds of our people. The Rishi had taken the path of risk and adventure for emancipating his people. The people got from him the courage to face death eye to eye if the cause was sublime. And, soon they realized that the cause of cultural and political emancipation of the Aryan land was worthier than any number of lives. It is, therefore, no surprise that many a famous patriot in northern India sprang from the ranks of Dayanand's followers. Swadeshi and boycott were preached from the Arya Samaj platforms. The British Government began to take severe notice of its activities. But the Arya Samaj always measured up to its responsibilities. Dayanand had forged this spiritual weapon from the interior.

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## *Glossary*

1. **Chakravarty** Emperor whose supremacy was sometimes established in all regions through a horse sacrifice.
2. **Upanishads**
3. **Darshanas** Holy books of the Hindus.
4. **Yajurveda**
5. **Sutras** Abridged form of religious knowledge
6. **Manu Smriti** Code of conduct by Manu dealing with Dharma.
7. **Charas and Sulfa** Intoxicants
8. **Ashtadhyayi** Sanskrit Grammar by Panini.
9. **Nastik** Non-believer in God and the Vedas.
10. **Kumbha** Hindu festival held after 12 years.



